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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001671

SIPDIS

KUWAIT FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE
STATE FOR D, NEA/ARPI, S/CT, DS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE'S
NOVEMBER 7-8 VISIT TO MANAMA

REF: A. MANAMA 1665

[1B.](#) STATE 234462
[1C.](#) MANAMA 1657

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Wrong Signal on Counter-Terrorism

[11.](#) (S) We warmly welcome your visit to Bahrain. Your trip comes at a critical stage. The court's November 1 decision to release the four terrorism suspects sends the wrong signal on the GOB's commitment to fighting the war on terrorism. Your meeting with King Hamad represents the best opportunity to deliver our message to the highest level of the Bahraini government.

[12.](#) (S) Since mid-July, when the (then) six terrorism suspects were re-arrested, Bahraini officials from Prime Minister Khalifa and Crown Prince Salman down have told us that the GOB would conduct a thorough investigation and aggressive prosecution of the case. The CP told Homeland Security Advisor Townsend and S/CT Ambassador Black September 15 that the case against the remaining four detainees was getting stronger and agreed that the four "must be put away." While assuring us of their vigor in prosecuting the case, senior officials including Minister of Interior Rashid Al Khalifa have complained of the lack of hard evidence against the suspects.

Detention Disrupts Planning

[13.](#) (S) Given the assurances, we had expected the suspects to remain in detention during the course of the trial. Though the outcome of the trial may have been in some doubt, according to the GOB, the suspects would have been held for three and a half months during the investigative period, and for the many months of the trial itself. On a practical basis, their removal from the scene would have conclusively disrupted any planning they had completed previously. It also would have sent a strong message that the GOB stood firmly against terrorism.

Consequences for Bilateral Relationship

[14.](#) (S) The judge's decision to release the suspects during the trial may have caught senior officials by surprise, as they have told us (Ref A). We now must push the GOB to take the suspects back into custody. At a minimum, they should be able to do this quickly and easily for Yasser Kamal, who fled the courthouse during a September hearing. They also must know that by not aggressively pursuing this case, they will put into jeopardy further progress on issues of bilateral interest, such as expeditious ratification and implementation of the free trade agreement and cooperation on CT issues through the ATA program and the establishment of a counter-terrorism operations center at the Ministry of Interior and other sensitive CT cooperation with RMAS.

Human Rights Advocates Under Pressure

[15.](#) (S) You also can express our concern about the GOB's closure and dissolution of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and detention of several human rights advocates and youth for organizing and participating in a rally in support of activist Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja. There is an apparent disconnect between the vigor with which the GOB has pursued these cases (all Shias) and the terrorism suspects (Sunnis).

Suggested Issues to Raise

16. (S) Suggested Talking Points:

Terrorism

-- The war on terrorism is deadly serious.

-- Governments must use all legal means available, especially the justice system, to pursue terrorists aggressively.

-- We are very concerned that Bahrain is not doing this.

-- The court's release of the four suspects even before the trial has started has deeply shaken our confidence that Bahrain is with us in the global war on terror.

-- We have raised all along our concerns about the suspects and that they be dealt with seriously. We have seen the Bahraini government, however, take a different path. The government:

-- released the six suspects in June;
-- again released two of the six suspects in September;
-- allowed Yasser Kamal to flee the courthouse in September;
-- provided no advance warning that the judge was going to release the four remaining suspects on November 1.

-- We urge you to find a way to put the suspects back into custody. This should be easy to do for Yasser Kamal, who clearly demonstrated that he is a flight risk when he fled the courthouse in September.

-- We are quite concerned that the case against the suspects could be dropped as early as December 6, when the judge will hear a constitutional challenge to the charges filed against them.

-- Bahrain's actions cause us to question its commitment in the war on terror, and sends a signal to the world -- especially to the terrorists -- that Bahrain is soft on terrorism.

(Watch Out For: Independent Judiciary)

-- Understand judiciary is independent. We are urging you to pursue the case aggressively so the prosecution has what it needs to win the case and put these men away for a long time.

Bilateral Relations

-- We are now at a moment of great opportunity. We are on the verge of ratifying and implementing the free trade agreement, and the U.S. Navy is evaluating its future support for the Bahrain School.

-- Questions about Bahrain's commitment to the war on terror will have an impact.

-- The FTA will be meaningless if business people have doubts about the security situation in Bahrain.

-- We can only expand our bilateral cooperation in security and counter-terrorism in an environment of trust. We will have to reconsider our plans for anti-terrorism assistance to the Ministry of Interior and our help in the establishment of a counter-terrorism operations center and other security and intelligence assistance.

Human Rights Situation

-- The GOB's decision to close and dissolve the Bahrain Center for Human Rights attracted quite a bit of attention in the United States.

-- As you work through this issue, we hope that Bahrain continues on its admirable path of reform and democracy.

-- In keeping with the rule of law, we hope there are no steps backward on protecting and promoting civil society and democratic institutions.

-- We encourage you to find a way to re-open the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. It is an important symbol of Bahrain's commitment to human rights.

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